

CHRISTMAS POEMS

THE CHRISTMAS GUEST

By SUSAN COOLIDGE

They sat at supper on Christmas Eve,
The boys of the orphan school,
The least of them all arose to say
The quaint old grace in the old-time way.

That had always been the rule,
"Lord Jesus Christ, be Thou our guest,
And share the food which Thou hast blessed."

The oaken rafters, holly bedight,
And brave in their Christmas guise,
Cast shadows down on the fair young face,

The hands clasped close, with childish grace,
The reverent, wistful eyes,
And for a moment, as he ceased,
Unheeded, smoked the Christmas feast.

The smallest scholar, then sat him down,
And the spoons began to click
In the pewter porringers, one by one,
But the little fellow had scarce begun.

When he paused, and said, "I think,"
And then he stopped, with radiant cheek,
But the kindly master bade him speak.

"Why does the Lord Christ never come?"
He asked in a shy, soft way,
"Time after time we have prayed
That he might make one of our company
Just as we did today,
But he never has come for all our prayer,
Do you think that he would if I set
him a chair?"

"Perhaps, who knoweth," the master said,
And he made the sign of the cross.
But the zealous little one gladly sped
And placed a chair at the table's head.

"Neath the great ivy boss,
Then turned to the door as in quest
Of the entrance of the holy guest.

Even as he waited the latch was raised,
The door swung wide, and lo!
A pale, little beggar-boy stood there
With shoeless feet and flying hair.

All powdered white with snow,
"I have no food, nor any bed,
For Christ's sake take me in," he said.

The startled scholars were silent all,
The master, dumbly, gazed,
The shivering beggar, he stood still,
(The snowflakes melting at their will),
Bewildered and amazed
At the strange hush, and nothing stirred,
And no one uttered a welcoming word.

"Til, glad and joyful, the same dear child,
Upraised his voice and said,
"The Lord has heard us now, I know,
He could not come himself, and so
He sent this boy instead,
His chair to fill, his place to take,
For us 'to welcome, for His sake."

Then, glad and joyful, everyone
Sprang from the table up,
The chair for Jesus ready set
Received the beggar, sold and wet,
Each pressed his plate and cup;
"Take mine, take mine," they urged
and prayed,
The beggar thanked them half dismayed.

And, as he feasted, and quite forgot
His woe in the new content,
The ivy and holly garlanded
"Round the old rafters overhead,
Breathed forth a strange, rich scent,
And it seemed as if, in the green-
hung hall,
Stood a presence, unseen, that blessed
them all.

O, loveliest legend of olden time,
Be thou as true today,
The Lord Christ stands by every door,
Veiled in the person of his poor,
And, all our hearts can pray,
"Lord Jesus Christ, be Thou our guest,
And share the food which Thou hast
blessed."

THE GOOD KING

By JOHN MASON NEALE

Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, crisp, and even.

Brightly shone the moon that night
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gathering winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"

"Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine-logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."

Page and monarch, forth they went
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament
And the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Falls my heart, I know not how,
I can go no longer."

"Mark my footsteps, good my page;
Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.

Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

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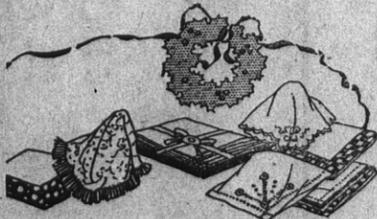
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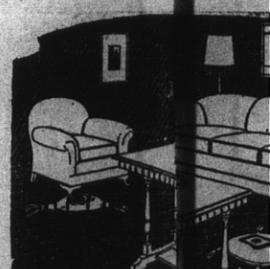
Whether you seek something especially elegant for evening wear or smart shoes for Winter outdoors, our footwear section is offering at remarkably low prices the handsomest footwear in the latest fashions for Winter.

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